

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 128822
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL BELIZE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T STATE 128822

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, GT, BH, UK, MX

SUBJECT: BELIZE DISPUTE:, CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH

SUMMARY: THE BRITISH SAY THEY HAVE DECIDED TO MOVE FOR
BELIZEAN INDEPENDENCE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THEY FEEL THAT
NEGOTIATIONS NO LONGER HAVE ANY HOPE OF SUCCESS. THEY
WANT OUR ACTIVE AND PUBLICLY DECLARED SUPPORT. END
SUMMARY.

1. UK DEPUTY MINISTER TED ROWLANDS DISCUSSED BELIZE
MAY 31 - JUNE 1 WITH UNDERSECRETARY HABIB AND ACTING
ASSISTANT SECRETARY LUERS.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 128822

2. ROWLANDS BEGAN THE MEETING BY SAYING THAT A CABINET
COMMITTEE HAD MET LAST WEEK AND HAD MADE THE FOLLOWING
DECISIONS: (A) THE BRITISH HAVE GIVEN UP HOPE OF NEGOTIATING
A SETTLEMENT WITH GUATEMALA. THEY HAVE TRIED
EVERY POSSIBLE COMBINATION OF OFFERS BUT WITH NO SUCCESS.
THE GUATEMALANS ARE NOT INTERESTED IN NEGOTIATING

SERIOUSLY. (B) THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED THAT IT CANNOT WAIT ANY LONGER. THEY HAVE EXPLICITLY REJECTED THE STATUS QUO AND HAVE DECIDED TO MOVE FOR BELIZEAN INDEPENDENCE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

3. THE BRITISH REALIZE THAT PUBLICLY BEGINNING THE INDEPENDENCE PROCESS CARRIES WITH IT A HIGH RISK THAT THE GUATEMALANS WILL RESPOND WITH A MILITARY MOVE. THE BRITISH ARE PREPARED TO TAKE THE RISK. BUT THEY WANT OTHER COUNTRIES TO SUPPORT THEM. THEY WANT TO "INTERNATIONALIZE" THEIR ACTION. THAT IS, THEY WOULD LIKE TO ENLIST SEVERAL OTHER NATIONS TO PUBLICLY SUPPORT THEIR DECISION. THIS INCLUDES TRYING TO GET OTHER NATIONS TO JOIN IN WITH MILITARY SUPPORT ON THE GROUND IN BELIZE. "INTERNATIONALIZING" THE ISSUE WILL PREVENT THE GUATEMALANS FROM SAYING IT IS STILL A BILATERAL DISPUTE.

4. THE BRITISH WANT TO ORGANIZE THIS "INTERNATIONAL" SUPPORT TO PROVIDE A TWO TO THREE YEAR GUARANTEE OF BELIZEAN INDEPENDENCE.

5. OF VITAL NECESSITY TO THIS PLAN IS ACTIVE AND PUBLIC U.S. SUPPORT. THEY DO NOT WANT OUR TROOPS BUT RATHER A PUBLIC STATEMENT THAT WE ARE WILLING TO SUPPORT BELIZEAN INDEPENDENCE.

6. MR. HABIB ASKED WHAT THE BRITISH INTENDED TO TELL THE GUATEMALANS IN THEIR NEXT NEGOTIATING ROUND. HE ASKED IF THE BRITISH WERE PREPARED TO OFFER SOME TERRI-
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 128822

TORY TO GUATEMALA AS THEY HAD MENTIONED BEFORE. ROWLANDS REPLIED THAT THE GUATEMALANS SIMPLY WANTED TOO MUCH. HE WOULD TRY TO KEEP THE NEGOTIATIONS GOING, BUT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO MEET THE GUATEMALAN DEMANDS.

7. HABIB ASKED IF THE BRITISH WERE PREPARED TO OFFER THE MOHO RIVER LINE. ROWLANDS SAID THEY WOULD HAVE TRIED TO DO SO IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY CHANCE OF SUCCESS. IF THIS WERE THE FINAL STEP NEEDED TO SEAL A BARGAIN, THEN THE BRITISH WOULD HAVE TRIED TO FORCE PRICE TO ACCEPT CESSION OF TERRITORY UP TO THE MOHO RIVER. BUT THIS WOULD NOT BE ENOUGH FOR THE GUATEMALANS AND THEREFORE THERE WAS LITTLE POINT IN FORCING PRICE TO GO ALONG.

8. HABIB ASKED IF THE BRITISH HAD CONSIDERED THAT THEY WOULD BE STARTING THE INDEPENDENCE PROCESS RIGHT BEFORE THE GUATEMALAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. ROWLANDS REPLIED THAT THE BRITISH WERE NOT WILLING TO WAIT ANOTHER EIGHTEEN MONTHS FOR A NEW GUATEMALAN ADMINISTRATION TO

TAKE OFFICE. ALL THE EVIDENCE POINTED TO THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION BEING EVEN MORE HAWKISH ON BELIZE THAN THE PRESENT ONE.

9. AFTER MENTION OF VARIOUS POSSIBLE OPTIONS OPEN TO US, HABIB SAID THE MATTER WOULD BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE SECRETARY AND WE WOULD INFORM THE BRITISH OF OUR POSITION.

10. FULL MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION BEING POUCHED. VANCE

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